

2023 -- S 0921

LC002675

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2023

A N A C T

RELATING TO PUBLIC UTILITIES AND CARRIERS -- RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC
TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Introduced By: Senators DiMario, DiPalma, Pearson, Gu, Lawson, Euer, Miller,
Lombardo, Mack, and F. Lombardi

Date Introduced: March 30, 2023

Referred To: Senate Housing & Municipal Government

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 39-18 of the General Laws entitled "Rhode Island Public Transit
2 Authority" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

3 **39-18-25. Public transit - Human services transportation.**

4 (a) The authority shall review existing routes servicing the paratransit and rural
5 communities to identify gaps within the system and determine the most feasible options to expand
6 these services to the underserved communities.

7 (b) The authority is authorized and directed to establish a paratransit voucher program. This
8 program shall:

9 (1) Operate as a one-year pilot program to study the feasibility of expanded paratransit
10 services to underserved communities.

11 (2) Provide those utilizing the program with prepaid voucher(s) to cover the expense of
12 paratransit services to be provided by the authority.

13 (3) Request funding from the general assembly to support the voucher program to be
14 requested by the authority when needed.

15 (4) Provide that, in compliance with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
16 those with disabilities residing in rural areas shall be eligible for the RIdE Program and qualify for
17 the paratransit voucher program.

18 (5) Provide program participants with ride services through third-party rideshare, taxi

1 services, and authority buses provided by the authority.

2 (6) Contract, through the authority, with at least one service provider that has handicap
3 accessible vehicles in their fleet.

4 (7) Provide participants with access to a ride scheduling platform. The platform may be
5 operated by the authority or third-party service provider.

6 (c) There is hereby appropriated, out of any money in the treasury not otherwise
7 appropriated for the fiscal year 2023-2024, the sum of five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) to
8 the authority to conduct the study.

9 (d) Upon completion of the pilot program the authority shall report to the senate president,
10 speaker of the house, and the governor on the outcome of the pilot program.

11 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO PUBLIC UTILITIES AND CARRIERS -- RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC
TRANSIT AUTHORITY

1 This act would require the Rhode Island public transit authority (RIPTA) to review existing
2 routes in rural communities to identify gaps in service and would authorize the authority to establish
3 paratransit vouchers and operate a one-year pilot program to study the feasibility of expanded
4 services in underserved communities. It would also provide that those with disabilities in those
5 areas would be eligible for the RIde program and be eligible for the vouchers. Financing for the
6 pilot program would be appropriated in the sum of five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000).

7 This act would take effect upon passage.

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